

REMARKS

Claims 4-7 are all the claims pending in the present application, claims 1-3 and 8 having been cancelled as indicated herein. In summary, the Examiner maintains the same rejections as set forth in the previous Office Action. Specifically, claims 1-6 remain rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Takei et al. (US Patent No. 5, 785, 024) in view of Ito et al. (US Patent Application Publication No. 2002/0139873) and Freyn et al. (US Patent No. 4,203,402). Claim 7 remains rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Takei, Ito and Freyn, and further in view of Takahashi et al. (US Patent No. 6, 269,798). Claim 8 is now rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph, as allegedly failing to comply with the written description requirement.

§103(a) Rejections (Takei / Ito / Freyn) - Claims 1-6

With respect to independent claim 4, Applicant maintains that the C-shaped clamp of Takei is not formed of elastic material, and that one skilled in the art would not consider the C-shaped clamp of Takei to be formed of elastic material. Therefore, the features of claim 4 are clearly not satisfied by the applied reference.

Applicant submits that claims 5 and 6 are patentable at least by virtue of their dependency from independent claim 4.

Claims 1-3 have been canceled, as indicated herein, without prejudice or disclaimer.

§103(a) Rejections (Takei / Ito / Freyn / Takahashi) - Claim 7

Claim 7 is patentable at least by virtue of its indirect dependency from independent claim 4. Takahashi does not make up for the deficiencies of the other applied references.

§112, 1st Paragraph, Rejections - Claim 8

Claim 8 has been canceled, as indicated herein, without prejudice or disclaimer.

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

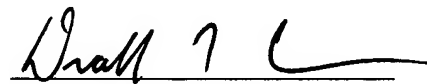
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Date: June 22, 2006